



NURSERY CARE AND CHILD SAFETY | *Policies and Practices*

The policies and practices laid out below were approved by the Session of New Hope Presbyterian Church to govern nursery care and child safety in the life of our congregation. These excerpts are taken from the relevant portions of New Hope’s Session Manual.

Should you have any questions about these matters, please feel free to contact us by email (office@newhopefairfax.org) or phone (703.385.9056).

I. Policies

(From Session Manual II.I.)

1. Nursery care shall be provided for young children (at parents’ discretion) during New Hope’s meetings on Sunday mornings, and during other official church events as warranted.
2. All New Hope communicant members and PCA Teaching Elders may serve as nursery workers if they are in sufficiently good health and are members in good standing (of the congregation or Presbytery, as applicable). Children 13 and older who are communicant members may serve as nursery workers with the permission of their parents.
3. The Session shall appoint an officer, normally a Deacon, as the Nursery Oversight Officer, who shall oversee nursery operations.
4. The Session shall appoint a female New Hope member as the Nursery Coordinator, to serve under the Nursery Oversight Officer, with duties as described in III.F.5.a (see below: “Practices”). She shall be a communicant member in good standing with knowledge and experience in the care of nursery-aged children.
5. The Session shall appoint female New Hope members as Lead Nursery Volunteers, with duties as described in III.F.5.b (see below: “Practices”). These shall be communicant members in good standing with knowledge and experience in the care of nursery-aged children.
6. The Session shall appoint two officers as the On Call Officers for the nursery, whose role shall be to provide assistance as needed during nursery operation.
7. Background Investigations.
 - a. The Nursery Coordinator, Lead Nursery Volunteers, and all church officers shall be subject to the performance of a background investigation prior to their service in the nursery or as classroom teachers. (Except for church officers, this requirement shall be

waived in the case of those who have been New Hope members for at least five years on the date of the adoption of this policy.)

b. If a background investigation reveals adverse information, the Session shall determine, in consultation with the person in question, whether the information disqualifies the person being investigated and the person should be exempted from service in the nursery or as a classroom teacher.

c. New Hope shall defray the costs of background investigations required by this policy.

8. Church officers shall notify the Session of any evidence or report that leads to the conclusion that it is probable that a person under the Session's jurisdiction has either been abused or has committed abuse while under that jurisdiction. The matter shall be investigated by the Session and, if warranted, reported to the civil authorities, which reporting action shall be communicated to the person(s) who originally made the report, if applicable. New Hope members are encouraged to report to a church officer any concerns about the safety of a child within the congregation, and to follow all applicable laws with respect to reporting evidence of child abuse.

II. Practices

(From Session Manual III.F.5.)

a. The Nursery Coordinator shall:

- (1) Prepare the nursery schedule and distribute it to the congregation.
- (2) Ensure that reminders are sent to those scheduled for upcoming nursery duty.
- (3) Approve adjustments to the nursery schedule subsequent to its distribution.
- (4) Coordinate with Lead Nursery Volunteers to ensure proper nursery operation.
- (5) Report to the Nursery Oversight Officer concerning nursery operation, including issues to be resolved and/or brought to the attention of the Session.
- (6) Ensure the care and cleaning of nursery equipment, including toys and linens, and the repair or replacement of equipment as necessary.
- (7) Ensure that those serving as nursery workers are familiar with nursery policies and practices.

b. Lead Nursery Volunteers shall during their shifts:

- (1) Serve as nursery workers.
- (2) Ensure that nursery policies and practices are followed.
- (3) Provide direction and support to other nursery workers as needed.
- (4) Determine if the parents of a child in the nursery should be contacted during the shift concerning an issue that has arisen. (Here and hereafter in III.F.5., "parent(s)" shall be understood to refer to parents or their designated representatives.)
- (5) Arrange for a substitute nursery worker if a scheduled worker is late or absent.

c. General guidelines for nursery operation.

(1) A minimum of three workers (including one Lead Nursery Volunteer) shall be scheduled for each shift. The Lead Nursery Volunteer shall remain in the nursery for the duration of the shift. She may adjust the number of nursery workers on duty, taking into consideration the number of children present, though a worker-to-child ratio of at least 1 worker to 3 children shall always be maintained.

(2) Nursery workers wishing to make adjustments to the nursery schedule subsequent to its distribution shall communicate proposed adjustments to the Nursery Coordinator for her approval.

(3) Church officers shall not be scheduled to serve in the nursery during the worship service, if possible.

(4) In the event that neither On Call Officer will be present during nursery operation, they shall arrange for another officer to serve in this capacity, who shall notify the Lead Nursery Volunteer.

(5) Parents should not bring children to the nursery who have had signs of contagious illness in the preceding 24 hours. If a child is brought to the nursery who appears to be contagious, the Lead Nursery Volunteer shall discuss the matter with the parent. If after such discussion the parent desires to drop off a child that the Lead Nursery Volunteer believes to be contagious, she shall contact the Nursery Coordinator or an On Call Officer in order for the matter to be resolved.

(6) The parents of children in the nursery, as well as the Nursery Coordinator and On Call Officers, shall be requested to keep their cell phones close at hand during nursery operation so that they may be contacted from the nursery if necessary (see below: "Contacting parents during the worship service").

(7) Nursery workers shall respond to behavioral problems lovingly, seeking to ensure the safety and comfort of other children and the orderly operation of the nursery. Only verbal corrective discipline is to be applied. Physical contact during misbehavior shall be limited to that which is necessary to prevent harm to a child. If significant behavioral problems occur, the Lead Nursery Volunteer shall request that the child's parent be summoned.

(8) Bathroom assistance is to be provided only by the child's parent.

(9) The door to the Training Room, where the nursery is located, shall be kept closed except when someone is entering or leaving.

(10) The following leadership contact information shall be made available to nursery workers: the names and phone numbers of the Nursery Coordinator and On Call Officers.

(11) During nursery operation, this leadership contact information, along with the nursery sign-in roster (see below: "Child drop-off and pickup"), shall be kept together in a designated location so that these materials may be quickly gathered. In the event of an emergency evacuation, these materials shall be taken by the Lead Nursery Volunteer or a nursery worker whom she designates.

(12) If a parent desires that any nursery practices be waived in the case of their child, the request shall be communicated to the Nursery Coordinator, who shall make a determination. Any waivers granted shall be communicated to all Lead Nursery Volunteers. If the Nursery Coordinator is unavailable at the time of such a request, the Lead Nursery Volunteer on duty shall make a provisional determination.

d. Child drop-off and pickup.

(1) When a parent drops off a child in the nursery, they shall enter the following information on the sign-in roster:

Child's name

Parent's name

Parent's cell phone (if available)

Special instructions (as needed)

(2) In the case of New Hope members and regular attenders, this information may be pre-printed on the roster and modified as necessary.

(3) The child shall be placed inside the nursery gate, at which point they become the responsibility of the nursery. Parents should remain outside the nursery gate during drop-off in order to minimize confusion. If a parent returns to care for a child during the nursery shift, the parent shall assume responsibility for the child and take them outside the gated area. The child may be subsequently returned to the nursery by repeating the sign-in procedure, as applicable.

(4) Any personal items left for use by the child or on behalf of the child (e.g., water bottle, diaper bag) shall be marked with the child's name. Tape and a marker shall be made available for this purpose.

(5) A name tag shall be placed on the child's back at the time of drop-off. In addition, a unique identifying tag shall be clipped onto the child's clothing and a matching tag given to the parent. The presence of this tag on the child indicates that they remain under the responsibility of the nursery; it is removed when the child is returned to the parent. These matching tags shall be used by nursery workers to validate the child-parent connection. (Though New Hope is a relatively small congregation, nursery workers may not be familiar with all of New Hope's children, and especially with the children of visitors.) If concerns arise about identifying a child's parent, nursery workers shall notify the Lead Nursery Volunteer, who shall either resolve the matter herself, or contact the Nursery Coordinator or an On Call Officer as necessary.

e. Contacting parents during the worship service.

(1) Parents shall be requested to keep their cell phones close at hand when their children are in the nursery, as nursery workers shall attempt to contact them, if necessary, first by text message.

(2) If this means of communication proves unsuccessful, nursery workers shall next attempt to contact the Nursery Coordinator or an On Call Officer, also by text, asking that they direct the parents to the nursery.

(3) If this also proves unsuccessful, a nursery worker shall leave the nursery and approach the parents directly.

f. Transition times.

(1) Nursery workers shall be diligent to arrive on time for the start of their shift, and shall be especially vigilant that requirements are followed during drop-off, pickup, and shift change.

(2) Those serving during the worship service shall report to the nursery at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the service so that they may review procedures, as necessary, and be prepared to receive children.

(3) Those serving during the sermon discussion shall report to the nursery as soon as possible after the worship service concludes. Those serving during the prior shift shall remain until dismissed by a Lead Nursery Volunteer, consistent with the worker-to-child ratio prescribed above. The Lead Nursery Volunteer of the prior shift shall remain until relieved by the Lead Nursery Volunteer serving after her.

g. Emergency evacuation procedures.

(1) In the event that an emergency evacuation of New Hope's meeting space is necessary, the On Call Officers shall assist parents in retrieving their children from the nursery. If the circumstance is especially urgent, however, the Officers may instead direct the Lead Nursery Volunteer and nursery workers to evacuate the children immediately, the children remaining in their custody until returned to their parents or a church officer.

(2) If access to the nursery from the main hall is prevented, the nursery workers shall evacuate the children using the emergency exit located inside the nursery, the children remaining in their custody until returned to their parents or a church officer.

(3) All nursery workers shall be made aware of evacuation routes from the nursery and a designated rendezvous location outside of New Hope's meeting space.